

Form & Fantasy

SURREAL AND ETHEREAL EMBRACE IN NANCY ANGERMEYER IMAGES

By **CHERIE THIESSEN**
Image photos by Nancy Angermeyer
Angermeyer portrait by Shari Macdonald

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**NANCY
ANGERMEYER**

Imagine photographs of a young child's face, a nebulous figure captured in movement, a woman's profile juxtaposed with a Greek statue.

Not mere photographs but images printed on fine rag paper with pigment-based inks in a process called giclée, from the French verb meaning "to spray" or "to squirt."

The internet encyclopedia, Wikipedia, defines it: The use of the ink-jet printing process for making fine art out of large-format digital images with a resulting printer output using fade-resistant dye in pigment-based inks. Developed in the 1990s, the process couldn't come too soon for this Saturna artist.

As her website defines it: "Recent photographs are digitally layered, preserving the nuances of form,



texture, light and color. Emerging images, often surreal and mysterious, exemplify the human spirit."

Nancy has always used her camera as a tool, taking photos of scenes and objects she wanted to paint and later expanding them into huge paintings. But . . . "It got to the point where they were just too hard for me to squeeze out. I decided I would just quickly paint on top of my photographs, and by the end of that first day I had painted 12 pictures. I was still frustrated with size, however, and was wondering if I should get a large-format camera and a bigger darkroom when giclée prints started coming out."

She has also always been heavily influenced by surrealism and its artists, painters like Man Ray and René Magritte, loving the contrast of unrelated objects that question the existence of each other. The human figure, embedded in natural, architectural or sculptural imagery, was often her focus, the resonance between them creating the impression of a flitting moment, an illusion.

Like many creative people, Nancy doesn't like to be the centre of attention; at an exhibit of her work, she prefers to be incognito, an artistic fly on the wall listening to what people say and perhaps even going so far as to appear a visitor herself, asking people around her what they think. With almost 20 exhibitions, she's had lots of practice.

What she also prefers is to live in an aerie with expansive vistas of sea, sunsets and sunrises. A devotee of seclusion and peace, she fell in love with a 55-acre Saturna ridge and in 1987 began building her own "off-the-grid" solar and wind-powered home there, complete with massive stone fireplace. Three years later, she moved in and then five years later she met her partner, Richard Blagborne, an architect previously from Salt Spring Island. Richard designed an addition to her home, and that's where her spacious, light-filled studio is now located, complete with darkroom.

In 1980, Angermeyer came to Canada from Kentucky where she had been studying art and photography.

"Kentucky is really a beautiful place and I loved the horses, narrow willow-lined country

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Above: Angermeyer's 'Fugue.'
Left: Photo from a Saturna sunrise series.
Page 19: 'Spinning Web,' and the artist herself, as photographed by Shari Macdonald of Salt Spring.

GALLEONS LAP EXHIBIT

The exhibit of works by Nancy Angermeyer runs at Galleons Lap

Photography Atelier-Gallery at 103 Park Drive in Ganges on Salt Spring Island from Friday, March 30 through Saturday, April 14.

Nancy and Galleons proprietor Seth Berkowitz invite guests to the opening reception from 5-8 p.m. on March 30.

The gallery will be open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., or other days by appointment or chance.



lanes, gardens, bluegrass festivals and hot balmy summers. It's there I became aware of Clarence John Laughlin and his haunting New Orleans graveyard photographs."

Initially she came to B.C. to visit one of her three sisters, who was living on the Sunshine Coast. She might have settled there, but recalls, "When I was in Roberts Creek and often looking up towards the south, there always seemed to be this patch of blue, and I'd say, 'How come it's raining here and it's sunny there?'"

So she came to check out the Gulf Islands and stayed.

With expansive views down Plumper Sound and across to North Pender, she is able to see both sunrise and sunset. Some of her photos attest to the magnificence of this daily ritual.

"I like taking shots in the sunrise. The camera gives me a reason to sit and be there for as long as I want."

I want to know about one particular work, that striking profile of a woman beside a classic sculpture, and Nancy tells me that when she was much younger and recovering from a potentially fatal illness, she spent some time in Cuba.

"That photo actually is in a cemetery there. I started going to cemeteries and getting very morbid



Above right:
'Shadow-
dance.'
Previous
page:
One of the
wonderful
wild goats
of Saturna
Island.

and fell in love with those sculptures — the angels, for example. This would have been in 1976. I started collecting mannequins and taking them to the cemetery to photograph them in the graveyard and stuff like that and one time I was driving up with a mannequin in the back seat of my car and the undertaker looked at me like 'what are you – a grave robber?'

What Nancy isn't always so keen on is the marketing aspect of art, getting out there and doing the hustle. But she does it; she knows she has to. She uses the internet, e-mails, phones and puts on her armour to hit a few galleries.

"But you can't do it for many times in a row. Then you have to build up again. You just have to think, 'Okay, what's the worst thing that's going to happen here? You're going to get turned down. They're really not going to like you. So?' That question has really helped me. I get strength from looking at my work. I really like it."

Haunting, evocative, ethereal and sometimes eerie, so do I.

You can view some of this artist's work at her website: www.nancyangermeyer.com, at the Fran Willis Contemporary Art Gallery in Victoria or at her March 30-April 14 exhibit at Galleons Lap Atelier-Gallery on Salt Spring Island. ✨